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# CONFERENCE *connection*

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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

October 15, 2019

## Becoming More than We Are

"Life is about becoming more than we are, about being all that we can be," writes Joan Chidester in her book *"The Gift of Years."* The book was used as a resource for the recent UCC Retired Servants' Retreat, an annual event for Retired UCC clergy, missionaries, volunteer ministry workers and spouses of the Southeast and Southern Conferences and co-sponsored by Blowing Rock Conference Center in Blowing Rock, NC. Those present ranged in age from late-sixties to mid-nineties, with about half of the participants from the Southeast Conference (see picture below)! Participants reflected on various kinds of change and how we respond to change.



However, "becoming more than we are" is not just a focus for those who have retired, it is for all of us – especially those of us who seek to follow Jesus the Christ. "Becoming more than we are and being all we can be" motivates us to move forward through whatever changes and challenges we might face.

This past weekend, there was a gathering of the AL-TN-MS Association – also known as the Western Association – and now named the "Living Waters Association". Through preaching, panel presentations, and conversations, there was the sharing of ways churches and individuals have been striving to become more than they are. The stories were amazing as those present were blessed by accounts about ministries of love, ministries of healing, and ministries of hope. The stories challenged us to "become more".

This kind of connecting as the Southeast Conference provides opportunities

in which we are able to be more than we are. Through the connections we encourage each other and we find ways to work together in following the call to be the church in today's world. I find this exciting and hopeful! I want to say thank you to those of you, both churches and individuals that continue to support the Conference with your presence, your prayers, and your financial contributions. The Conference concluded the 2019 budget at the end of September (we use a fiscal budget October-September). I am excited to share that we ended the year over budget – more income than expenses! The Board of Directors had made various decisions that contributed to this. But also of great importance was your support to Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM) and the Friends of the Conference Fund. Your financial support helps us “be more than we are” as we make connections with one another.

Moving into the future as a Conference, there is much work to do and much joy to share. There are challenges of course, but our faith calls us to see the vision and then work toward it, calling us to be “more than we are” and “all that we can be.” I sincerely hope that each of you will join us on this exciting journey! Blessings, Char Burch

## News from the Conference Office

### From the Generosity Coordinator

*"You can't beat GOD giving, no matter how you try. The more you give, the more GOD gives to you, so keep on giving, it's really true...You can't beat GOD giving, no matter how you try!!!"*

A huge note of thanks to all of you for all the ways you have contributed to this conference. Because of your financial gifts and your continued support, we are approaching the end of year with renewed joy and faith that we will meet our goals. THANK YOU!!



You should receive your third quarter giving statements by the end of this month. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me directly.

Please continue to invite me to your church so that we may continue to share our missions and our ministries. Together, we make a difference.

Continued blessings, as we journey...TOGETHER,

Min. Carrole

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## **“What Makes Us One?” The Fall Meeting of the “Living Waters Association”**

*by Rev. John Gill*

Clergy, delegates, and members from 14 churches gathered at The United Church of Cookeville, TN on October 11-12 for the annual Fall Meeting of the Western Association (formerly the AL-TN-MS-FL Association). At a time of deep division in our world, we came together to tell the story that makes us one - and how it is expressed in scripture and in the many ministries of love, healing, and hope taking place in our churches across the region.

Together, we worshipped, shared stories, heard news from the conference, planned for the future, and, of course, feasted on food and good company. Rev. James Bowman Harris, Rev. James Janecek, and Rev. Dorinda Harris took turns preaching about our shared calling to “Ministries of Love – Healing – and Hope.” Rev. Glenna Harris led Taize chants for morning prayer. Glenna and other leaders from our churches took part in panels sharing some of the many ministries that are going on in our midst: supporting marginalized people in our communities, advocating for immigration justice, providing safe places for transgender persons to gather, caring for members facing dementia and death, supporting medical needs for global neighbors, creating spaces for community groups to gather to meet community needs as basic as children’s diapers and as complex as affordable housing, and so much more.

Rev. Char Burch, our Interim Conference Minister, and Carrole Moss, the Southeast Conference Generosity Coordinator, joined us to share news and updates from the Conference. Delegates voted to elect a new Leadership Team that would continue to focus on planning an annual Fall meeting, fostering communication among our churches, and maintaining dialogue with the SEC Board of Directors about our role in keeping our churches connected. The new Association Leadership Team includes Rev. Richard Barham of Spirit of the Cross UCC, Huntsville, AL (Moderator); Tonya Barnette, Church of the Savior, Knoxville, TN (Treasurer); Marcia Bentley of First Congregational Christian Church, Birmingham, AL; Cynthia Macmillian Stinson, Community Congregational Church, Montgomery, AL; and Rev. James Bowman Harris, United Church of Cookeville (Liaison to the SEC Board).

Toward the end of the meeting, we discussed renaming our Association in some way that would be simpler than AL-TN-MS-FL, less confusing than the

Western Association of the Southeastern Conference, and more reflective of the spirit we represent. One of our delegates, Kim Morris of Church of the Savior, noted all the rivers that run through our states and suggested that we become "The Living Waters Association" in the Southeast Conference, which was enthusiastically approved by a vote of the gathering. The new name makes sense to me because every time we gather, I feel as though I've had a refreshing dip in the living waters of God's grace and an inspiring glimpse into the many ways God's waters of love, healing, and justice flow through our churches. I always come away wanting to connect more and drink more deeply of the UCC spirit of ministry we all share.

Rev. Dorinda Broadnax and I are grateful and proud to have served in leadership for the Association for the last few years. For more information about what we are trying to do in our Association, please feel free to e-mail me at [cosjg@att.net](mailto:cosjg@att.net).

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## Annual Meeting Youth Explosion

*by Gloria Liggins,*

Our Annual Meeting will be held at Community Congregational Church in beautiful Montgomery, Alabama, on June 19-20, 2020. Our Keynote Speaker will be Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries for The United Church of Christ and Senior Pastor of Christ The King United Church of Christ in Florissant, MO. The planning has begun. Tyler Ung, Circular Congregational Church and myself are co-chair for the youth portion of the Annual Meeting.

This annual meeting will include a Youth Explosion. In this historic city of Montgomery, we want to fill the city with our Youth. We want to make this a time for them to get to know each other and experience the UCC as never before but we need your help. We do not want to just bring them here for a meeting. We want to make this an experience that will waken their spirit, encourage their hearts, empower their gifts and inspire them to make a difference. We would like to receive ideas of sessions and gatherings that interest them. We are asking each congregation to present us with one representative who will gather ideas from your youth and present them to us so that we may bring them to the planning committee. Please have these names to us by October 15, 2019.

Please feel free to contact us with questions.

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## Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2019. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

### Week of October 21

- Methodist Congregational Federated; Demorest, Georgia
- Soo Man Chang
- Artis Johnson
- Troy Sanders
- J Houston Wheeler

### Week of October 28

- First United Church UCC; Belvidere, Tennessee
- Sankofa UCC; Atlanta, Georgia
- Kwan Hae Chi
- Charmaine Penn Johnson
- Edward Schneider
- Ted Elsenheimer

## Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Birmingham AL; Pilgrimage, Marietta GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Peace Church, Clemson SC



## News from the Wider Church



### Retired Servants Retreat

by C. L. "Curly" Stumb, Southern Conference

#### **Retreat participants find support and motivation while celebrating "Gift of Years"**

*It has taken almost a lifetime to love a sunset, to value company, to give up what has always been too much, and to learn to revel in what is enough -- but it has been worth the wait. -- Chittister, The Gift of Years (p. 70, Kindle edition)*

Fifty-four participants (25 from the Southeast Conference) , from mid-sixties to mid-nineties -- attended the UCC Retired Servants Retreat this year at Blowing Rock Conference Center. Participants engaged in an age-appropriate theme: "Growing with the Winds of Change" referencing Joan Chittister's book The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully. Retirees of Southeast and Southern Conference welcomed the opportunity to gather in the High Country for this special shared time among colleagues and friends.

A text to a cell phone on Sunday evening heralded a message -- read aloud -- announcing that a grandchild had been born in California, with the good news that the child was well, as documented with photo. Glasses were raised to this good news of great joy. Rev. Clara Benson's smiling face expressed her feelings.



A necrology was read, remembering persons who had died in the past year. Participants heard the preacher's words in Ecclesiastes: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die;...."

The "Winds of Change," at this retreat, brushed participants with impact of technology, a changing church, establishing a legacy, boundary sensitivities / awareness, and (stating the obvious): growing older gracefully.

The following folks from Southeast Conference participated: Ed and Judith Olson, TN; Trish Greeves, GA; Jacqueline Graves, GA; Joyce Myers-Brown, GA; George & Martha Bennett, GA; Clarice & Tom Mitchell, TN; Clara & Jim Benson, SC; Bill & Janeen Carrell, TN; Al & Jackie Dwenger, TN; Phil & Vickie Nevius, TN; Marie Fortune/Anne Ganley TN; Char Burch, TN; Elaine Ahrendt, TN; Mark Canfield/Teri Kelly, TN.

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## Blowing Rock Conference Center Century Club Celebration Weekend

You are invited to the Blowing Rock Conference Center *Century Club* Celebration Weekend, November 15-17, 2019. Celebrate and see the projects you have supported and we have completed. Learn about our latest Century Club project. Your stay is "on us" as we celebrate our Century Club achievements and plan for the future. Bring a friend and their stay is "on us," too! Childcare will be available during Saturday lunch. A full schedule of events is available [on our website](#). Please RSVP by Thursday, November 1, 2019 (828) 295-7813 or [amy@brccenter.org](mailto:amy@brccenter.org).

## News from our Local Congregations



## Ellen Sims Receives Seminary Alumni Award

Methodist Theological School in Ohio has presented Ellen Sims with the John and Ruth Mount Alumni Award for Distinguished Service, the school's highest honor for graduates. MTSO President Jay Rundell presented the award at an Oct. 7 luncheon during Alumni Day.

Sims, who earned a Master of Divinity degree from MTSO in 2006, is the founding pastor of Open Table United Church of Christ in Mobile, the first UCC congregation in southern Alabama. She serves the community in a variety of roles. She is past president of a Mobile organization called The Quest for Social Justice and a board member of Prism United, an LGBTQ support group for teens that her congregation founded five years ago. "Your pastoring in this area and your work have made an impact," Rundell told Sims. "And it's continued, here and all the way to Alabama."

"I'm just overwhelmed with memories of my experiences and relationships here," Sims said. "The theological education I started here has shaped and sustained me in my ministry ever since."

The Mount Alumni Awards were created in 1990 to recognize graduates of MTSO who have achieved vocational distinction. The award program was



created by the late John Mount, a founding MTSO Board of Trustees member, and his late wife, Ruth.

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## New Montgomery, AL Mayor is Moderator of Local UCC Congregation

The City of Montgomery, Alabama made history on Tuesday, October 8th by electing Probate Judge Steven L. Reed as the Civil Rights bastion's first African-American mayor. Mayor-elect Reed is an active member and the Moderator of the Community Congregational United Church of Christ in Montgomery, which will host the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting in June 2020. [Read more on our website.](#)

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## First Congregational Church hosts Atlanta Music Festival

The Atlanta Music Festival is an annual event that draws on concert music and spirituals of African Americans, an enduring legacy now shared throughout the world. This year the festival returns to its historic roots at First Congregational Church and brings back the Fisk Jubilee Singers who sang in the original festival in 1910. Saturday, Nov. 2, 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of First Congregational Church, UCC in downtown Atlanta, 105 Courtland Street, NE. Other performers include Bass/Baritone Calvin Griffin, Tenor Timothy Miller, the Meridian Chorale and soloists. [More details.](#)

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## Milnes Scholarship Application

The Milnes Fund of Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC, was established in 1996 through a bequest from Jack and Marjory Milnes to provide scholarships for individuals studying to become ministers in the United Church of Christ.

To apply for a scholarship, please submit the following:

1. current *curriculum vita* and
2. cover letter which:
  - a. includes a statement of ministerial philosophy;
  - b. outlines future hopes/plans for ministry in the United Church of Christ;

- c. describes financial need; and
- d. provides three references, including one from your pastor.

Award amount may be up to \$3,000. The application should be submitted by December 5, 2019 for the spring semester and should be sent to [Mail@Pilgrim-Church.com](mailto:Mail@Pilgrim-Church.com) in the subject line please put Attn: Milnes Scholarship or via postal mail to Ministry Commission Chair; Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC; 400 Glenwood Drive; Chattanooga, TN 37404; Phone: 423-698-5682. For additional information, you may contact Pilgrim Church.

## Training and Learning Opportunities

### 2020 Southeast Winter Youth Retreat

Save the Date: The 2020 Southeast Winter Youth Retreat will be held January 17-20 at Blowing Rock Conference Center in North Carolina. The guest speaker will be Alicia Crosby, with music by Ocean Elizabeth. Register at [uccwinteryouthretreat.org](http://uccwinteryouthretreat.org).

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### Dementia Friends Workshop

Join a growing movement of people like you who are helping fellow community members living with dementia. A little support can make a big difference. Become a Dementia Friend!

You become a Dementia Friend by attending a one-hour informational session to learn about this worldwide movement, about living with dementia, and the simple things you can do to support someone living with the disease. The one-hour session is a discussion led by Dementia Friends Champion Robin Andrews Smith. It is not a training session. You'll learn what dementia is, what it's like to live with the disease, and some tips for communicating with people who have dementia.

Date and Time: Sunday, October 20th at 3 pm

Location: Kirkwood United Church of Christ. Atlanta Georgia

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### Back Bay Mission Trip Information Session

Friday, November 22, 2019 at Pleasant Hill Community Church is an opportunity to find out more about the upcoming Nov 8-14, 2020, work

camp mission trip to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi MS. Please mark your calendars and save the date for this informational presentation which will explain what Back Bay Mission does and what it offers as well as some trip expectations, options, accommodations, requirements, costs, transportation and more.

The information session is for anyone wanting to know more; if you attend you are not required to make the trip. A first planning session for the trip will take place in January. In February a \$100 deposit per person (towards a total of \$250) will start the mission trip process by meeting together regularly and learning about the guidelines provided by Back Bay Mission.

The work of Back Bay Mission is to create and maintain spaces and relationships for people to discover their courage to redefine themselves as persons of value, strength and possibility. This work is accomplished through Housing Recovery, Bridges Out of Poverty, Micah Day Center, Loaves & Fishes Community Kitchen, and a Client Choice Food Pantry. Mission Trip participants have opportunities to serve in one or more of these programs.

## Conference Calendar

### **Southern Region Women's Retreat**

October 18 - October 20

Blowing Rock Conference Center

### **Staff Meeting**

October 22 @ 9:00 am - 10:30 am EDT

### **Commission on Ministry Meeting**

October 24 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm EDT

### **Upper Room UCC Fellowship Fall Potluck Supper**

October 26 @ 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm CDT

Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville, TN

### **Healthy Boundaries 101: Fundamentals**

November 2 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm EDT

Kirkwood United Church of Christ, Atlanta, GA

### **Healthy Boundaries 201**

November 5 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm EST  
Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur, GA

**Board of Directors Meeting**

November 7 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

**Annual Meeting Planning Session**

November 8 - November 9

Community Congregational Church, Birmingham AL

**Installation of Rev. Brian Byrne**

November 10 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm CST

United Church of Huntsville, Huntsville, AL

**Commission on Ministry Retreat**

Nov. 15-16, 2019

Beloved UCC, Birmingham, AL

**Ordination of Stephanie Milton**

November 17 @ 11:00 am - 12:30 pm EST

First Congregational Church, Atlanta, GA

**SEC Clergy Retreat**

March 8-10, 2020

Monteagle, TN

**SEC Annual Meeting**

June 19-20, 2020

Montgomery, AL

**National Youth Event**

July 22-25, 2020

Purdue University, IN

## Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch**; [cburch@secucc.org](mailto:cburch@secucc.org)

Assoc. Conference Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; [hbardole@secucc.org](mailto:hbardole@secucc.org)

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; [cmoss@secucc.org](mailto:cmoss@secucc.org)



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